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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2016

TAGS: PREL MASS ASEC SNAR PTER CASC LE

SUBJECT: MGLE01: A/S HILLEN'S MEETING WITH ISF GENERAL RIFI

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).  
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SUMMARY

¶1. (C) A/S Hillen met with ISF General Ashraf Rifi at the ISF headquarters in Beirut to discuss U.S. - Lebanese cooperation on security assistance programs. Rifi thanked A/S Hillen and the U.S. for our assistance, and said he looked forward to a long partnership with the United States. Rifi said that Lebanon is working to improve coordination between its security services, and said that the Lebanese would benefit greatly from any training programs the U.S. could provide. He emphasized Lebanese efforts to combat terrorism, including the ISF's January arrest of an al-Qaeda cell in Beirut. Rifi said that all Lebanese are united behind the idea of disarming local militias, but that actual disarmament will take some time to ensure that the Lebanese can do it in a safe and secure manner. End summary.

Lebanese Participants:

General Ashraf Rifi, Commander of the Internal Security Force  
General Joseph Hajjal, Chief of State

U.S. Participants:

A/S for Political Military Affairs Dr. John Hillen  
Major Reginald Robinson, US Air Force, Military Attach  
Matthew William Lehrfeld, Special Assistant  
RSO Art Baley  
Matt Pilcher (Embassy Notetaker)

A STRONG U.S. - LEBANESE  
PARTNERSHIP

¶2. (C) A/S Hillen opened the meeting by noting Lebanon's importance as a strategic partner and ally for the United States, and said that the United States hopes that to deepen this relationship by working with Lebanon on a coordinated security assistance package. A/S Hillen said that the U.S. hopes to give Lebanon the tools it needs to build a sovereign, free and secure Lebanon, and that Washington is looking forward to General Rifi's visit in June. Rifi said that he was looking forward to his Washington trip as well, and that he was thankful for American assistance, especially the FBI's USD 1.5 million forensic equipment donation kit which had arrived at ISF headquarters that very morning. Rifi said he knew the U.S. was working hard to quickly deliver concrete assets, and that he appreciated the effort. Rifi added that he appreciated the U.S. commitment at a time

when Lebanon is striving to overcome internal divisions and build a strong, united country.

COUNTERTERRORIST EFFORTS

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¶3. (C) Rifi said that one area of particular concern for the ISF is Lebanon's counter terrorist program. He acknowledged that Lebanon has a problem with terrorism, but noted the ISF's success in a January raid on an al-Qaeda cell in Beirut, one member of which, he claimed, is a lieutenant to Abu Musab Zarqawi. RSO added that the ISF and Embassy coordinate closely on counter-terror activities, and that the Embassy's upcoming ATA program assistance would give the ISF even more capabilities in this area.

MILITIAS

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¶4. (C) A/S Hillen asked Rifi what his position was on Lebanese militias. Rifi said it was a political issue and that it was something all Lebanese have an interest in resolving. He said there is a debate about Hizballah's status as either a resistance or a militia, but said that the fact that Hizballah's arms are now on the negotiating table is itself a significant step forward. In terms of Palestinian militias, Rifi said that all Lebanese are united on the need to disarm Palestinian militias, he said that doing so is only a matter of time. Rifi said that the GOL will start with limiting Palestinian weapons outside the camps. The next step, he said, is to remove the threat from inside the camps as well, but he admitted that this will be difficult because right now Lebanese security forces aren't even allowed to enter the camps. Rifi worried about weapons

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and possible terrorist organizations operating inside the camps, but said that it was an issue the Lebanese would have to approach slowly and carefully in order to resolve the problem and maintain stability and security at the same time.

KELSEY KLOTZ

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¶5. (SBU) Finally, A/S Hillen mentioned USG interest in returning nine year old Kelsey Klotz to her custodial father in the United States. A/S Hillen said that this is an important issue at high levels of the USG. Rifi said that he was aware of the issue, and that they knew where Klotz is located. But because she is currently in a part of Lebanon controlled by Hizballah forces, he said was concerned about their ability to secure her custody safely. "We'll take care of it, but we want to do it in a way that is safe."

FELTMAN